

Demetrios Giannaros



State Representative - Farmington - 21st Assembly District

\$ Farmington Fares Better in State Grants \$

Even though this was the toughest budget year since the Great Recession of 1991, we succeeded in raising state grants to Farmington by more than \$300,000 (including an increase in education grants) over the Governor's initial proposed budget. Farmington is still receiving close to \$4.5 million in state grants for 2003-2004, in addition to approximately \$2.6 million for the Farmington High School expansion.

Consumer Concerns

Identity Theft

Victims of identity theft have increased at an alarming rate. It includes bank, credit, computer and telecommunications, social security and tax fraud to name a few.

A new law increases penalties and changes how businesses collect credit information when you make a purchase. Businesses will now be prevented from printing anything but the last five digits of your credit or debit card and must destroy any customer records that have personal information that is no longer needed. The law also prohibits individuals and businesses from publicly disclosing Social Security numbers, with some exemptions.

Victims of these crimes can now request that false information be removed from public records. Credit rating agencies may now block credit information from your credit report relating to this type of crime.

PA 03-156

E-Mail – SPAM Restrictions

Tired of checking your E-mail and finding a number of unsolicited ads? We understand your frustration, and we took action. As of October 1st, we banned unsolicited E-mail ads (SPAM) after you have notified the sender to discontinue communications. E-mails to Connecticut residents must include "ADV" in the subject line and a toll-free number or valid E-mail address to unsubscribe in the message. **PA 03-128**

Dear Friends,

The 2003 session of the Connecticut General Assembly has finally come to a close. This year has been filled with challenges but there have been many accomplishments as well.

The news has covered in detail the budget problems in our state and many other states throughout the nation. Indeed, to understand the process we went through, it is important to note that this was a nationwide challenge with forty-seven out of fifty states facing about the same, or worse, budget constraints. We have worked very hard to reach a compromise and present a two year bi-partisan budget. At the end of a difficult session, Farmington fared better than the budget proposed by the Governor.

This newsletter highlights some of the important legislation we passed concerning children, seniors, health, consumers and the environment.

I thank all of you for your input and support during the budget process and throughout the year. Your ideas and suggestions are always welcome and I am always impressed by the thoughtful messages I receive from my constituents.

It is indeed a pleasure to represent you at the Capitol and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Demetrios

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21st District

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state representative

Using Sick Time For Family And Medical Leave

This act allows private-sector employees to use up to two weeks of sick time while on leave under the state's Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). It prohibits employers from denying such use or firing, threatening to fire, demoting, suspending, or in any way discriminating against an employee who uses or tries to use sick leave for FMLA purposes. The new leave provision allows an employee (1) to attend to the serious health condition of a child, spouse, or parent or (2) for the birth or adoption of a child. **PA 03-213**

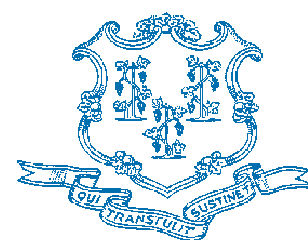
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State Health Plan Coverage for Employees of Small Companies

This act adds employees of small employers to the list of those for whom the Comptroller, with the Attorney General and the Insurance Commissioner's approval, is authorized to arrange group hospital, medical, and surgical health insurance under the state employee health plan. Under the act, a small employer can, on average, have no more than 50 employees, at least half of whom must be employed in the state. The cost will be paid by employer/employee. **PA 03-149**



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Senior Issues

Group Health Insurance Options – Age 62 and Over

Social Security benefits can begin as early as age 62, but Medicare eligibility begins at age 65, unless you are disabled. Seniors who elect reduced Social Security benefits at age 62 need to bridge this gap for health insurance coverage. This year, we required group comprehensive health insurance plans to give Social Security recipients age 62 to 65 an option to continue their coverage under the group plan. **PA 03-77**

Nursing Home Fire Sprinklers

As this bill passed into law, the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority (CHEFA) is required to develop a proposal to plan for and finance the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in nursing homes. The plan will be presented to the Governor and the Public Safety, Human Services, and Public Health committees by February 1, 2004. **PA 03-3**



Rep. Giannaros presenting a citation to Librarian Barbara Gibson at Farmington Library Re-Opening.

Children/Education

An Act Concerning After-School Programs

Studies have proven that after-school programs keep students out of trouble and away from dangerous activities. This bill requires establishing an after-school committee that will help coordinate current programs, expand to a statewide after-school system and better use public and private funds. The education commissioner can seek funding for after-school programs from private organizations that do not receive any state education grants. **PA 03-206**

Amber Alert: Broadcast Emergency Response

In January of 2002, Connecticut started using the AMBER Alert program in conjunction with the Connecticut Broadcasters Association and other state agencies. This plan allows for law enforcement agencies to notify broadcasters of a child kidnapping.

This session we passed a bill that gives immunity to broadcasters who participate in the AMBER Alert Plan, if the information has been provided to the broadcasters by a law enforcement agency. In addition to our broadcast media, the Connecticut Lottery Corp. and local and state law enforcement agencies have formed a partnership to broadcast emergency messages on nearly 3,000 lottery ticket terminals and 300 instant message displays in lottery outlets.

This new law helps facilitate the goal of the AMBER plan which is to have as many people in the surrounding community help in the capture of the suspect and the safe return of the child to their home. This is done by broadcasting enough information so that individuals can watch, look and report to the police if they do indeed see someone fitting the description. **PA 03-111**

Indoor Air Quality In Schools

I co-sponsored a bill which ensures that our teachers and students can learn in a healthy environment. This bill prevents the development of future indoor air quality problems, and provides a funding mechanism to remedy for "certified school indoor air quality emergencies." It calls for greater attention to the proper maintenance of all facilities, the establishment and implementation of indoor air quality programs and changes the requirements for new school construction in order to prevent unhealthy conditions from developing. **PA 03-220**



Rep. Giannaros recognized by an environment health organization for his leadership in sponsoring legislation requiring schools to monitor air quality.

Federal No Child Left Behind Act And Teacher Certification

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates a number of changes that greatly impact Connecticut's schools. To comply with NCLB, the General Assembly adopted an act to address the new federal testing requirements. Currently, Connecticut students are tested in grades 4, 6, 8 and 10; now, 3rd, 5th, and 7th graders will be tested beginning in the 2005-06 school year. As of 2005, all state tests will be given in the spring rather than the fall. Any costs incurred from these additional tests must be covered by federal dollars.

In addition, requirements for teacher certification are made more flexible to help ease Connecticut's teacher shortage. Teachers with specified elementary and special education certificates now can teach kindergarten. Also, experience gained from working in the Birth-to-Three program now counts toward teacher certification experience requirements. **PA 03-168**

Glucose Self-Testing in Schools

Glucose self-testing is a discreet and simple way for students with diabetes to keep tabs on their blood sugar levels while at school. We passed an act that prohibits school boards from restricting glucose self-testing in school if a student has a physician's or APRN's written order stating s/he needs to conduct the test and is capable of performing a self-test. **PA 03-211**

Strengthen Child Support Debtor Laws

The General Assembly passed legislation that cracks down on delinquent child support payers. This bill mandates credit reporting of outstanding child support payments of \$1,000 or more. In addition, the bill allows the Department of Social Services to seize lump-sum lottery winnings of a delinquent child support parent. **PA 03-109**

Environment

Protecting Long Island Sound

By extending the moratorium on projects in the Long Island Sound, the General Assembly ensured that all environmental concerns and requirements are met before any project moves forward. This moratorium freezes any final decisions on any electric power line, gas pipeline, or telecommunications line crossing Long Island Sound that requires either a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need from the Connecticut Siting Council or approval by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). **PA 03-170**

Reduction of Mercury Emissions From Electric Plants

With a constant eye on Connecticut's air quality, we passed legislation this year that requires all coal-burning electric plants to reduce the amount of mercury they emit into our air. The goal of better air quality for all of Connecticut's residents is met by the requirement that all plants must reduce their mercury emissions rate by 90%. **PA 03-72**